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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001161

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY QUITO'S MANTA FOL RECOMMENDATIONS

REF: A. HOTR IIR 6 828 0002 09
[1](#)B. HOTR IIR 6 828 0354 08
[1](#)C. QUITO 497
[1](#)D. STATE 88601
[1](#)E. QUITO 963
[1](#)F. QUITO 223
[1](#)G. QUITO 694
[1](#)H. QUITO 723
[1](#)I. QUITO 1067

Classified By: Ambassador Heather M. Hodges for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: To coordinate the USG's withdrawal from the Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL) effectively, Embassy Quito proposes a timeline for specific withdrawal milestones and a detailed list of the Embassy's recommendations on the disposition of FOL assets. The manner in which the USG departs the FOL, including the disposition and handover of assets, will shape the lasting image of the USG's presence at Manta. The Embassy is coordinating the preparation of a package of releasable documentation to respond to the GOE's request for information in its "operational audit" of the FOL. The Ambassador will raise the gas-and-go issue with President Correa at the nearest appropriate opportunity. The Manta FOL will continue to be a highly politicized issue, especially through the April 2009 elections, although media interest may be fading. (End Summary)

PROPOSED FOL ASSET DISPOSITION

[1](#)2. (C) To pursue an orderly and dignified withdrawal from the Manta FOL, Embassy Quito has prepared a proposal for the eventual disposition of FOL assets. The USG's departure from the Galapagos in the 1940s (when it destroyed every facility) is still a highly sensitive issue for Ecuadorians, even mentioned to the Ambassador when she presented credentials. The press will likely be given full access to publicize the condition of the FOL as left by the USG upon departure. Therefore, the Embassy proposes that the FOL be left with assets that keep it functional upon handover, and that certain other assets be donated to NGOs or the community to promote a positive image of the U.S. upon departure, per the following proposal.

Assets to Be Left at the Eloy Alfaro Air Force Base for the Ecuadorian Air Force:

- All real property and real property installed equipment (RPIE) on the real property records, to include facilities, generators, fuel tanks and the reverse osmosis water purification unit should be conveyed to the Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE). (Note: Real property records (facilities and RPIE) will be signed over to Embassy Quito's Military Group on September 18, 2009.)
- All buildings should be left with at least a minimum supply of furniture and appliances to maintain the function of the facility. No wires should be pulled from the walls (communication and electric).
- Billeting rooms (126 each) should be left with 2 beds with linen, 2 nightstands, 2 lamps, 2 dressers, 1 desk and chair, 1 phone, the key system, and the industrial washers and dryers.
- The fitness facility should be left with the wall mirrors and the gym equipment from the fire department. (Note: Some gym equipment will be transported to Embassy Quito (at cost of the Embassy) for use by U.S. Embassy personnel.)
- The current recreational facility should be left as an empty building to be used as needed by the FAE. All built-in shelving and bars should remain.
- The dining facility should be left with appliances which are built-in. Tables and chairs, cooking utensils, pans, cutting boards, eating utensils, dishes, and cups should also remain. U.S. personnel should continue to use this facility until 1 October 2009.
- The fire department bunk rooms should be left with 2 beds with linen, 2 nightstands, 2 lamps, and 2 dressers. The common room should be left with the couches. The training room should be left with the tables and chairs. The kitchen should be left with all appliances, utensils and dishes. The alarm room should be left with the workstations; the alarm system should remain and can still be used. The bay should be left empty.
- All operations facilities should be left with functional office spaces to include 1 desk, 1 chair, 1 phone, and 1 bookshelf for each; modular work spaces will be left with one chair and one phone (where they currently exist). The conference room and briefing room should be left with the tables and chairs. The medical offices should have all medical related equipment removed and be left as a standard office with existing office furniture. The armory should have all security items removed and be left as a standard office.
- The post office should be left with the built-in boxes and associated keys and the office areas should be left with the desks, chairs, and phones (where they currently exist).
- The guard shacks should be left with all built-in shelves and desks.
- The warehouses should be left with shelves, lights, and fencing.
- The hangars should be left empty.
- The vehicle maintenance facility should be left with the office space containing one desk, one chair, and one phone. The remainder of the facility should be left with existing cages.
- Two 1987 fire-trucks and one ambulance should be left for ongoing support of the Manta airport, which may be critical to any future "gas-and-go" counter-narcotics flight operations by USG aircraft beyond October 2009. (Note: These items will require an ITAR exception and one fire-truck will require maintenance. End Note)
- Any air ground equipment for C-130 platforms that is close to its end of useful life should also be left behind for GOE use.

Assets to Be Left for Donation to Local Ecuadorian NGOs and/or Charity Organizations:

- 25 vehicles used by existing FOL personnel.
- Most other miscellaneous property, to include excess beds and linens (approx. 240), desks, chairs, televisions and DVD players (approx. 170), refrigerators (approx. 180), microwaves (approx. 150), couches (approx. 40), file cabinets, self-contained office units, sports equipment, free standing grills, fitness equipment, and washers and dryers should be left for donation to local Ecuadorian NGOs, charity

organizations, and for the Ecuadorian military, counter narcotics operations in the northern border region of Ecuador. (Note: The cost of shipping would likely exceed the value of a number of these items.)

Assets to be Transported from the Manta FOL to USG Locations Outside Ecuador:

- Two fire-trucks. (Note: these trucks will require maintenance. End Note).
- High-value equipment to include communications equipment, switches, and weapons racks should be shipped from the Air Base prior to turnover of the property.
- The Air Force squadron at Joint Task Force-Bravo has requested some excess items (still to be identified) from the dining facility and the billeting facility be shipped to their location.
- We understand that Comalapa CSL and Curacao CSL will also submit wish lists for some equipment.

PROPOSED FOL WITHDRAWAL TIMELINE

13. (C) The Embassy recommends the following timeline to ensure an orderly withdrawal and effective coordination with the GOE on the handover of assets and maintenance of facilities at the Manta Air Base. We understand that the Department of Defense would prefer to complete the withdrawal prior to the end of the fiscal year.

January 1, 2009 Finalize list of disposition of FOL assets.

January 15, 2009 Receive finalized transfer timeline from DOD.

Submit ITAR exception requests.

February 28, 2009 Notify GOE of need to assume firefighting responsibilities in July and to assume utility costs for airport at end of August or in September.

May, 2009 Cease USAF flying operations.

July, 2009 Cease all flying operations.
Cease firefighting operations.

September 18, 2009 Transfer of FOL installations to Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE).

UPDATE ON OPERATIONAL AUDIT OF THE FOL

14. (C) The Defense Attache's Office and Military Group in Quito are leading the Mission's effort in the preparation of a package of information, coordinating with US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South), to deliver to the GOE in response to the MFA's September 17 diplomatic note requesting information regarding the FOL (Refs A and B). The documentation will provide releasable information in four areas: 1) Log of flights to and from the Manta Air Base during the period 2007 and 2008; 2) Register of foreign personnel that entered the Manta FOL during the same period; and 3) Chronogram of monthly flights presented to the FAE by JIATF-South. We anticipate that the documentation package will be ready to deliver to the GOE by early January, 2009.

GAS-AND-GO MODEL

15. (C) Following on President Correa's initial positive comments regarding the gas-and-go model of counter-narcotics flights (Ref C), the Ambassador mentioned her interest in discussing a Manta FOL issue to Correa during presentation of credentials on October 2, and both agreed to discuss the matter during a later meeting (Ref E). The Ambassador then raised the issue of a gas-and-go model with two of Correa's closest advisors, the President's Legal Adviser Alexis Mera and the Secretary of Communication Vinicio Alvarado, on November 26; they suggested a meeting with President Correa in mid to late December. The Ambassador is seeking such a meeting (Ref D).

FADING INTEREST?

¶16. (C) The Manta FOL continues to be a highly political issue within Ecuador, receiving more attention each time Ecuador's sovereignty is called into question. The Colombian attack on a FARC camp in Ecuador on March 1 reinvigorated opposition to the Manta FOL as rumors spread concerning U.S. involvement. The Sovereignty Committee of Ecuador's Constituent Assembly called for an operational audit of the FOL and passed articles forbidding foreign military installations in Ecuador (Ref F). The GOE's notification of termination of the FOL agreement on July 29 received significant press attention (Refs G and H). In contrast, the release of the GOE's Intelligence Commission report on October 30 (Ref I) briefly revived discussion by the GOE of the USG's alleged involvement with the FOL in the March 1 attack, but media attention to the issue quickly dissipated.

COMMENT

¶17. (C) A smooth exit strategy will help ensure that the FOL stays out of Ecuador's political debate in the lead-up to the April 2009 elections. It will also help improve the USG's opportunities for discussion of the gas-and-go model and other forms of counter-narcotics cooperation, shape the lasting image of the USG's presence at the Manta FOL, and improve the USG's overall image in Ecuador.

HODGES